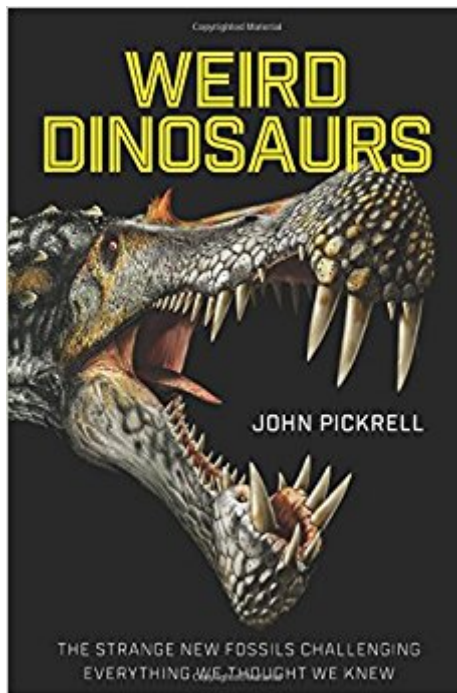




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# Weird Dinosaurs: The Strange New Fossils Challenging Everything We Thought We Knew



## Synopsis

From the outback of Australia to the Gobi Desert of Mongolia and the savanna of Madagascar, the award-winning science writer and dinosaur enthusiast John Pickrell embarks on a world tour of new finds, meeting the fossil hunters who work at the frontier of discovery. He reveals the dwarf dinosaurs unearthed by an eccentric Transylvanian baron; an aquatic, crocodile-snouted carnivore bigger than T. rex that once lurked in North African waterways; a Chinese dinosaur with wings like a bat; and a Patagonian sauropod so enormous it weighed more than two commercial jet airliners. Other surprising discoveries hail from Alaska, Siberia, Canada, Burma, and South Africa. Why did dinosaurs grow so huge? How did they spread across the world? Did they all have feathers? What do sauropods have in common with 1950s vacuum cleaners? The stuff of adventure movies and scientific revolutions, *Weird Dinosaurs* examines the latest breakthroughs and new technologies that are radically transforming our understanding of the distant past. Pickrell opens a vivid portal to a brand-new age of fossil discovery, in which fossil hunters are routinely redefining what we know and how we think about prehistory's most iconic and fascinating creatures.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This history of the discovery of some of the most outlandish creatures that ever lived, and the excitement of paleontological research, will be sure to both entertain and instruct. No other such historical narrative exists that is focused on weird extinct beasts. (Spencer Lucas, author of *Dinosaurs: The Textbook*, sixth edition) Fascinating.... Readers learn of beautiful opalised dinosaur

bones from Australia and a crested dinosaur found approximately 13,000 feet up Antarctica's Mt. Kirkpatrick, demonstrating that dinosaurs were widely distributed across the globe. (Publishers Weekly) In the 26 years since Jurassic Park was released we have unearthed about 75 per cent of all known dinosaur species.... Weird Dinosaurs is a tour de force through the latest digs across the planet. It features the amazing people unearthing new fossils and highlights the odd reptiles that roamed all corners of the earth millions of years ago. (Marcus Strom Sydney Morning Herald) Australian Geographic editor John Pickrell brings us up to date with Weird Dinosaurs, using the species' often bizarre features as a giddy hook. Some had bat-like wings, some had elaborate neck frills, others shock with how large (or small) they were. Pickrell spends a lot of time on quests of individual fossil hunters and he shifts the focus from traditional fossil destinations such as North America to current hotspots China, Mongolia and Antarctica. (Doug Wallen The Big Issue, Australia) Weird Dinosaurs is an informative and entertaining text with a nice blend of narrative and scientific fact... the facts and information included are simply fascinating. (Sharon the Librarian)

Weird Dinosaurs examines the latest breakthroughs and new technologies radically transforming our understanding of the distant past. Pickrell opens a vivid portal to a brand new age of fossil discovery, in which fossil hunters are routinely redefining what we know and how we think about prehistory's most iconic and fascinating creatures.

Dinosaurs are just a fun topic by themselves and thanks to the Jurassic movies they've become even more popular so I was very grateful to have found this book written with a very fluid writing style as that made it easier to share information with my kids. We all loved this book especially as I also used it as an educational tool to open new doors for them. Geography lessons were created by looking up the various locations mentioned through Google Earth and Google Images. Science lessons lent themselves easily because this book opened up new avenues as we were able to talk about various climates, weather patterns, landscape conditions, and animal information. History was done by learning about paleontologists, what they do, who were some of the more well known, and about cultures in the various places dino bones were found. It would've been nice if more pictures of the dinosaurs had been included but I just used Google Images to supplement what wasn't in the book. This book overall is so incredibly full of interesting information in a very easy form it just made it a lot of fun to read.

This book is not a guide to weird dinosaurs. It's a highly readable and entertaining account of some of the stranger dinosaurs discovered in the last decade or so. It's more about contemporary paleontology and paleontologists than anything else. It's a kind of science journalism, in which Pickrell travels to various places (including some actual sites) and interviews lots of people. Some of the stories are remarkable, such as the historic one of Franz Baron Nopcsa von Felső-Szilvas; Nopcsa was a paleontologist (and adventurer and possible spy) from the Transylvania part of the old Austrian empire, whose speculations were borne out decades later, and who shot himself and his lover in 1933 when Hitler came to power--a script for an adventure movie. There's been an explosion of knowledge about dinosaurs in the last couple of decades. In 2006 there were thought to be about 527 dinosaur genera, and that estimate was up to 1,100 genera in 2016. There must be tens of thousands of dinosaur species with more being recognized every year. The book's chapters cover fossils and expeditions in Alberta, Egypt, Romania, Mongolia, Australia, Argentina's Patagonia, Madagascar, and both the Arctic and Antarctic. The latter are fascinating--even with a temperate rather than polar climate (in today's terms of "polar") the animals still had to deal with several months of near-darkness, and appear to have adapted well. Among the surprises the book discusses are the extreme range of sizes, dinosaurs the size of a rabbit to 70 tons of animal more than a hundred feet long. My favorite from the book is named Yi Qi (pronounced ee-chee) one of the remarkable fossils recently discovered in China, a bat-like glider. I was unaware that dinosaurs on islands could evolve into miniature forms (the way elephants became pygmy elephants on some islands). Pickrell also brings in other aspects. Some places are simply too dangerous for scientists to visit (Algeria, Libya) and others have little or no local community that supports paleontological research (most of South America except for Argentina), so large areas are simply not well-known in terms of fossils, and future expeditions are likely to bring many more surprises. Then there's the business of fossil poachers, people who find fossils and sell them to dealers, the market apparently being large and unusual fossils of quality bring large prices, but they are usually lost to science and the circumstances of their discovery unrecorded. For me, the most interesting portions were looking for fossils in Antarctica, and fossils discovered in the opal-mining region of Australia. Opals are a semi-precious gemstone, and opalization can occur in fossils.

Very well written, this book contains important contributions from worldwide research on dinosaur fossil discoveries that break our conception of their appearance and capabilities. It is now being discovered that mostly they were feathery, they were very fast and there were even hot-blooded specimens living in polar forests. These findings allow paleontologists to better understand the

evolution of birds and their adaptations. The same author mentions that the border between dinosaurs and birds is blurry. For example, theropod carnivores had feathers to fly and evolved to reduce their size to resemble primitive birds. Another great discovery that has surprised experts, is Changyuraptor and Microraptor species that had both feathers and leathery gliding membranes like those of a bat. Globally, many new discoveries of new species with surprising features and adaptations have been recorded, such as impressive ornaments that look nothing like our days in nature. Within the large sauropods information is being found on the evolutionary trend for gigantism, which explains how they managed to grow from a brood of less than one kilogram to 70 tons and 38 meters in length in a few years. In addition, these investigations give clues about the ancient climatic conditions of the planet and the movement of the continents. My gratitude to the Publisher and NetGalley for allowing me to review the book

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